



Rev. THE *Synod*
INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION ^{A 262.19}
W65

OF THE

CHURCHES :

OR,

Congregational Independency

VIEWED FROM WITHIN.

BY

HENRY WILKES, D.D.

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PREFACE.

At the annual meeting of the Congregational Union of Canada, held in the City of Montreal, June 1857, the Author was requested by vote of the Assembly to write an Essay "on the Internal Administration of the Churches to be read at next meeting." This request was complied with, and the Essay read at Brantford, June 1858. It was favoured with the thanks of the Assembly, and the Author was further asked "to enlarge and publish it in a manual volume, at his earliest convenience; the Union believing that it will thereby render valuable service to Congregationalism." The time of such convenience has now arrived, and this request is also complied with. To guard against misapprehension in any quarter as to the responsibility for the sentiments herein expressed, and as to the design of the following pages, the introductory remarks read at Brantford are placed in front of the whole :

"It is not the design of this paper to vindicate by proof and argument the Scriptural nature of Congregational

Independency as a system of Church polity. In this presence that may be safely assumed. Our concern is rather with the orderly and effective administration of that system; in giving heed to which, we may find that there are notions crude, prejudiced, and without aught of scriptural basis, among many of its adherents; and we may find also arguments incidentally arising in favour of the system itself, suggested by its obvious adaptation to develop a Christian manhood. It may be well to state in explanation that the writer, in preparing this paper at the request of the Congregational Union of Canada, has refrained from consulting any of the valuable little works that have been written as manuals on this subject, preferring to offer to his brethren his own thoughts on the several matters embraced in the discussion from a Canadian point of view; and after a Canadian pastorate of nearly two and twenty years' duration. It should be further noted that he has not designed to prepare a paper to which he would commit the body, or which he would read as the exposition of the views of the denomination, but one for the views contained in which, he alone is responsible."

With increasing confidence in the scriptural polity of our Churches, with cordial love to the entire brotherhood, and with prayer for the Divine blessing, the Author, with these explanations, commits his little work to the thoughtful attention of the reader.

MONTREAL, *April*, 1859.

THE INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION

OF THE

CHURCHES.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY EXPOSITION.

Design of Church Government.—A Church.—Intercommunion of Churches.—Importance of distinction between principles and details.—Illustrations of the distinction.—With what limitation a Church may have its own rules.—Grave responsibility of individual members.—Attendance at Church Meetings.

It is sufficiently obvious to render argument unnecessary that Church Government is not an end, but a means for the attainment of an end. The design of the Lord in the institution of churches was two-fold,—conservative and aggressive. He would have the disciples built up in faith, knowledge, and holiness; he would have them banded together in love, and growing up together a holy temple in the Lord;—and thus mighty in unity and in character, he would employ them in the work of propagating the Gospel; they are aggressively, in the name and in the power of Jesus, to go up and possess the whole earth for Him. As

government is but a means to this two-fold end, it is, *a priori*, likely that its principles and forms will be manifestly conducive thereto. Its arrangements will train disciples to a robust manliness of character; its work will call forth individual devotement; and its results will be an united and able phalanx, ever ready for the service of the Lord. Surely that interpretation of disputed passages in the New Testament having relation to church organization and government is most likely to be the true one, according to which arrangements are established best fitted to secure the accomplishment of this great design. Our feeble advocacy is for churches thus modelled,—churches composed of the Lord's saved ones, who are in training for a most blessed service.

In order to clearness, some *exposition* is demanded, which is given in the following particulars:—

1. A church is an organized assembly of disciples of Christ, christian men and women, who agree to walk together in the fellowship and ordinances of the Gospel, and who have, as officers, one or more bishops and deacons.

2. Such a church, when organized, is complete in itself for all associate action, and is independent of all extraneous ecclesiastical authority;—but it is not independent of the sympathy, confidence and co-operation of sister churches: on the contrary, the inter-communion of the churches is a scriptural requirement, and mutual love and respect should ever be cherished between them. It so happens, however, that just at this point sundry crudities and prejudices have a wide-spread influence, and sometimes knavery avails itself of their existence to work much mischief. Blind to the important distinction between the exercise of authority

and the respectful tendering of advice—between the coercion of law, and the persuasions of love,—some good men are jealous of all interference on the part of other churches. Losing sight of the obvious inter-communion in affection, in substantial aid, in fraternal visitation and counsel, and in general sympathy, which existed among the churches of the New Testament, these worthy people, terrified from their propriety by visions of “a Legal Hundred,” or of “Synods and General Assemblies,” or of “Prelatical power,” or of a “conclave of Cardinals,” fly in the face of all inter-communion, and would isolate every church from its fellows as effectually as a hermit could bury himself alive in the wilderness. The adoption of such a course would speedily reduce a church to the uselessness of the hermit. But, in addition to this evil, knavery, which could not carry out its designs amid an affectionate and wise inter-communion of churches, takes advantage of these prejudices, ignores the sympathy and counsels of neighbouring churches, and works out its designs by means of a faction of its own creation. The thing wanted to counteract and prevent all this, is not outside *authority*, but merely outside sympathy and wise counsel; the moral effect of which would be sufficient to produce all that means can accomplish. This understood inter-communion of churches provides satisfactorily for the management of difficulties which sometimes arise between pastor and church. It has been said that our weak point is precisely here: that a church may brow-beat, ill-use, and commit other grievous wrong against a pastor ere they drive him away a broken-hearted man. It is hardly needful to say that an acknowledged inter-communion that gives to either or both parties

a right to call a council of neighbouring churches, meets this case better than other systems which boast their superiority at this point. No one can read with candour the New Testament without perceiving that throughout there was a lively sympathetic inter-communion among the churches of the primitive age.

3. In the internal administration of such a church *the distinction between principles and details should be made prominent*. It is marvellous that this should not at once present itself to every mind; yet the amount of confusion and uneasiness that has been inflicted upon churches by the neglect of this distinction is incalculable. Illustrations in a familiar style may be pardoned here:—A church, newly formed, is called to add to its number by profession. Deacon A insists that Congregationalism requires that two members of the church must visit the candidate, put him through a catechetical exercise, and then report to the church. Should this view not be conceded, he declares that you are departing from Congregational principles. “Yes,” declares brother B, “and those two must be deacons of the church.” Sister C, however, whispers that “she does not understand this kind of Congregationalism. Where she came from, the candidate always appeared before the church and told his or her experience, and answered questions; and it was *so interesting and impressive!*” Mr. and Mrs. D “are astonished. In their Congregationalism the candidates always appeared before a committee, and this committee reported!” Now, unless friends A, B, C and D are wise enough to see that there is no principle involved in the matter, but mere detail,—the simple principle being that the church is called upon to form its judgment as to the qua-

fications of the candidate, and that it may adopt what method it deems best in the particular case to obtain the information on which its judgment is to be based,—there may arise a pretty little quarrel out of these diversities of method.

Again, there is need of an election to office in the church, and the question is, What is the Congregational mode of doing this? One exclaims, "Oh ballot, of course." "Far from it," says another, "I am accustomed to nomination, and the vote taken thereupon by a show of hands." "You are both wrong," cries a third, "Congregationalism requires that the pastor and deacons should say who they think best qualified, and the vote is to be taken on their recommendation." Now the only thing which Congregationalism has to do in this matter, *is the vote itself*: the suffrage of the church in assembly is a matter of principle, but *how it* shall exercise that suffrage is so completely a thing of detail, that it may be legitimately changed every time it is exercised. Indeed it were well if on each occasion of such exercise, the mode of doing it should be specifically decided, so that the young members may be trained up to discern the distinction between firm principle and elastic detail.

Still further, there are members and even deacons of churches who deem it an essential part of Congregationalism to have every movement initiated in open church meeting; whereas, as doing things decently and in order is an essential part of scriptural church polity, such a course is rather the reverse of Congregationalism. Let us listen here to the complaint of a valued pastor: "The church meetings have all along been a source of sorrow and perplexity. Every matter must be *first mooted* and dealt with in all its detail

by the church collectively. It is thought uncongregational to appoint a committee of discipline—nay, it is so for me and my deacons to prepare together the order of church meetings, and to agree about cases to be acted upon. This is an instance of raising a mere detail into the position of a principle of Congregationalism. The principle is, *the church must decide*; but there is large room for a wise and even elastic expediency in the preparation of business for the action of the church, and in the other details that precede such decision. And not only is there room for it, but in many churches there is a grave necessity therefor, if their procedure is to be dignified and orderly. At the same time such preparation should be made by competent parties appointed for the purpose; for there are few things more unworthy in themselves, or disastrous in their effects, than is the course adopted sometimes of getting up a plan or a proposal on paper, obtaining signatures thereto, and then bringing it into the church, without notice, for its action thereupon. A movement such as this is eminently disorderly and should be invariably pounced upon. No society can have peace and prosperity in which a faction is allowed to obtrude its measures upon the body without notice or order; a proper government of a church will check such disorder *in limine*.

4. It is almost too obvious to need a statement, that a church is entitled to have its own rules and plans for carrying out the great objects of its existence. It can adopt its own mode of procedure,—can act by means of Committees or without them as it sees fit,—and keeping within the range of discretion allowed by our Divine Master, may adjust its practical course to its own special circumstances

and wants. Whatever is understood as "Parliamentary" is in order in Congregationalism. The church, as sometimes a deliberative, but always an executive body, may lay down rules for its own guidance in action, and because of their tendency to promote peace and order, and to carry out the design of the Head of the Church in the institution of churches, it may look for his blessing upon them. And yet this right has been often abused and the Lord insulted, by churches making terms of communion which he does not sanction, and by thus excluding from his table the disciples whom he loves.

5. It is a principle of the first importance that every member of a church has a grave responsibility in respect of maintaining its character, and of doing the utmost for its orderly and effective working. Watchfulness over self, and fraternal watchfulness over others, faithfulness in love where warning or reproof are needed, and where the action of the church is required, are among the most urgent relative duties of members of the church. They have also to promote its efficiency by devotement of time, toil, and prayer to the advancement of the Lord's work in which it is engaged. The disciples of Jesus are not called into christian fellowship to be drones. When they are idle and unfruitful, they dishonour their Master. He makes them light that they may shine;—salt that they may preserve from corruption.

It so occurs that at this point there are sundry fears, and sensitive shrinkings, which need rebuke. Because, amid the imperfections of all christian people, church meetings are not always harmonious, and are sometimes scenes of excitement, they dread them and keep away from them.

They leave others to manage church matters: as for them they cannot bear an argument. Now while it is to be lamented that occasionally church meetings are otherwise than they should be, yet are they training-schools of mind and heart for a more robust manhood in Christ. In them "forbearance with one another in love" is brought into exercise and fostered;—people learn to agree to differ and to yield to one another, and to work together though of somewhat diverse sentiments. Experience has shown the vast training power for usefulness, and self-reliance, and leadership in holy enterprise of its members, existing in a well-conducted Congregational Church. And in truth these happy practical results will be found in the long run to be the most potent defence of our principles. If we are to be mighty in their advocacy, we must work them well. Let it be seen that they bring out primitive piety, intelligence and zeal, and build up a manly character, and none can really gainsay them.

The leaving to others church action is very much akin to the course of those good people who decline all intermeddling with political questions. Because good men will not act, the nation gets into the hands of thieves and gamblers, of men without character or principle. They incur a large amount of national sin, which at length brings down from heaven national judgments in which the personally innocent suffer as well as the guilty. Thus the sin of these neglectors of public affairs finds them out. It is often so in the church. Because the balancing element provided in the quiet and peace-loving members is withdrawn from church-meetings by the unwillingness of such to attend them, there is less check upon the movements of

the power and noise-loving, and mischief to the whole body accrues. Let every member understand his responsibility for the order and beauty of the church, and conscientiously act as so understanding it.

It is not forgotten that these occasional difficulties, these attritions and inquietudes in churches, are used as an argument against our polity; and that its unfitness for the masses of pious people is averred, because of their fear of acting without being led. But our reply is that the churches of the New Testament had their excitements and disorders, greater than we know anything of; and that just as slavery emasculates its victims, so does the church polity which gives no room for the responsibility of the many, or for their action, emasculate the christian manhood of its adherents. If we are to have the greater good, we must somewhat tolerate the lesser evil—an evil which has its source in human depravity. And that evil will be greatly lessened, if not altogether extinguished, by such an administration of the churches as both common sense and scripture dictate.

Keeping in view the points that have had our attention, inquiry has now to be made as to *the organization of a church,—its functions when organized,—and the best modes of performing them.*

CHAPTER II.

ORGANIZATION OF A CHURCH AND ITS FUNCTIONS.

Other Churches should be consulted.—Choice of Pastor and Deacons.—Its functions are : the conversion, instrumentally, of sinners ; the gathering and training of disciples ; the conservation of its own purity.

On the organization of a church it is only needful to say that while a few disciples who agree to walk together in church fellowship may be legitimately constituted a church, yet it is seemly and tending alike to the glory of the Master and the edification of his people, that the interposition of other churches should be asked for in such an important act as the organization of a church. Many churches have been rashly organized, only to struggle through a brief and troubled course, to what has proved a needful dissolution. The question, "Is it desirable to organize these disciples into a distinct church?" is one which may well engage the attention, and elicit the exercise of the wisdom of neighbouring churches, assembling by pastor and delegate to deliberate and give advice. This course, moreover, imparts greater solemnity and importance to the act, if it be deemed best to perform it.

Sometimes the gracious arrangements of Divine Providence render it possible, at the date of church organization, to recognize a pastor who is the choice of the people, and to set apart deacons whom also they have elected to that

office. At other times the organized assembly has to wait in prayer to the Head of the Church for these gifts. Much earnest prayer is called for when this is the case; and that especially for wisdom profitable to direct. Few things are more to be deprecated than the rash settlement of a pastor. It is the cause of many of those equally sudden and disastrous removals, which are apt to shake all confidence in the stability of our institutions, and which give great occasion to the enemy to blaspheme. At this point, again, a word is to be said in favour of consultation with neighbouring churches, by means of a council. It greatly tends to dignify the act and to promote a feeling of happy reliance in the wisdom of what is done, when it proceeds in harmony with the counsels of sister churches.

Death and changes from time to time occasion the necessity for the election of pastors and deacons in older churches. This, of course, is done by the votes of the whole body; but it is a useful preliminary and a common one for the church, by vote, to appoint a committee, including the deacons, whose duty is to adopt such measures as will bring before the church a suitable minister for their choice. In some of our churches a majority, consisting of two-thirds, is required in order to the validity of an election to the office of pastor.

The principal functions of a church are—*First*, the gathering of precious souls from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. This comprehends its foreign as well as home work,—its evangelistic labours outside its own ordinary assemblies, as well as within them. I place this first in the matter of importance. The church accomplishes but little for the glory of God or for the good

of men which is not devoted to the business of saving precious souls. This is the Lord's appointed and consecrated instrument, and woe unto the world if it be allowed to lie idle, and woe unto the church that is idle in this thing.

Secondly, the gathering in of members—adding them to its fellowship—and then training them in knowledge, piety, and usefulness. The churches are to be schools of instruction and of training to disciples, in which they are to grow up to a christian manhood. As already hinted, their fitness for this work and success in it, are among the tests of their scriptural nature as institutions.

Thirdly, to conserve its own purity, and strength, and character by a watchful care over individual members; and when needful, by the exercise of a scriptural discipline.

These functions include within the range of their performance the stated ministry of the word, the training of the young in the family and Sabbath School, the requirement of evidence of regeneration in order to membership, the culture of the minds and hearts of members and their training for usefulness,—and, when needful, the sad but important work of discipline. But they do not include debating and adopting or negating resolutions on questions of public or social polity in the abstract, nor the forming a code of morals, nor the ordinary work of a debating club; a church of Jesus Christ is rather an executive than a deliberative body, whose business is to put into execution the laws of our Divine Master:

The inquiry into the best modes of performing these functions will occupy more time, and introduce us at once to

CHAPTER III.

THE CHURCH MEETING.

Importance of this Assembly.—Impropriety of non-attendance, and causes of the neglect.—Church Meeting defined.—Duties of the Pastor therein.—Careful division of complex questions.—Two illustrative instances.—Deacons indignant.—Instrumental Music.—Members may ask Church to consider a matter if Pastor refuses to do so.—Ordinary business of a Church.—Mode of conducting it.—Minutes.

On the vital importance of this assembly in the working of a Congregational Church, on the sin of neglecting it, and on the causes of such neglect, reference may be made to an excellent leading article in the *Canadian Independent*, April 16, 1858. The writer happily points out that herein reside the voice and power of the church, and that hence neglect of this meeting on the part of members greatly diminishes the moral force of the body. "Legally and constitutionally," says this writer, "the action of a duly-called church-meeting is the action of the church. But the power of a church mainly consists in moral influence and sympathy, and unless the action of a meeting carries the minds and hearts of the people with it, it will not amount to much more than the words in which it is expressed. What, for instance, is the reception of members by the church but a mere form, or what personal religious acquaintance is gained with them on the part of those who know nothing of their coming in? What weight attaches to an

act of discipline, when the majority of the members are ignorant of the facts, and have taken no part in the decision? In such cases, and indeed in all matters temporal and spiritual, the absentees not unfrequently hold themselves at liberty to disregard or even oppose the deliberate resolves of the church-meeting, though they may know nothing of the facts or reasons on which these were based. The minority that attend may not be the choicest members of the church. They may frustrate measures acceptable to a real majority of the membership—but, being the church-meeting, they have all power. But it would be an endless task, were we to attempt to trace out all the evil effects of this practice of absenteeism."

Inquiring into the causes of this sad neglect, our author finds them first of all in *religious apathy*; secondly in defective conviction of *duty to Christ* in this matter; thirdly, in the feebleness of the sense of *individual responsibility*; and fourthly, in *the manner in which church-meetings are often conducted*, and the *scenes which occasionally transpire in them*. On all these points that article is worthy of thoughtful attention.—It is one of the designs of these hints to remove, as far as can be done, the last cause of non-attendance.

A church-meeting is, as its name indicates, a duly-called assembly of the membership of the church, with the pastor in the chair. The tone of the New Testament suggests that the pastor is clothed with considerable authority as standing president of the body. "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be

at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you brethren, warn them that are unruly." "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you." * True, he is not "to lord it over God's heritage"; neither, on the other hand, is he to suffer factions to rend it, or disorder to damage it. It belongs to his office to expound the law of Christ in every case demanding church action; and, unless corrected in his interpretation thereof by formal action of the church, to require in an affectionate manner, but with all decision, that it should be carried into effect. The office of the pastor gives him power to rule as out of order new matter suddenly thrown into the assembly without having been first presented to himself and other officers, and prepared for the church. In a well managed church this will seldom be attempted; it will become the habit of the members to have their suggestions first carefully considered elsewhere, before they are laid before the brotherhood in church meeting.

In cases wherein two distinct points are involved, though in the case practically linked together, it is his duty carefully to separate them, to decide the order in which they shall be considered; and to rule as out of order, yea and to maintain with inflexible decision such ruling, all discussion of the last until the first has been decided.

Two illustrative instances of what is meant may have a place here. During the temporary absence from home of the Pastor of a church, the Deacons took the opportunity of pointing out to the Church the favourable condition of their

* 1 Thess. v. 12-14. Hebrews xiii. 17.

finances, and that it was proper to make an immediate addition to the salary of the Pastor. There was something in their manner of doing this which was offensive to several members, and especially to one. This offensive thing was regarded as in accordance with other similar things, and as indicative of disposition to exercise unwarrantable authority in the Church. The one member just referred to had a prominent duty to perform in public worship, the others sympathized with him, and were ready to stand by him. He refused on the next Lord's day to appear in his accustomed place, and in rather unmeasured terms during the following week denounced the conduct of the Deacons. On the return of the Pastor he found the Deacons greatly exasperated by the unreasonable conduct of this man, and especially by his unsparing condemnation of them and of their course. They had tried to reason with him and to shew him that he was wrong, but 'twas all in vain. Excision seemed to them the only course left for the Church to take.

A Church meeting was called, and the Pastor narrating the simple facts of the case called attention to the two-fold character of the matter before them. The so-called delinquent maintained strenuously that the Deacons were in the wrong, and he justified his animadversions on that ground. There could be no doubt that such was his opinion, and the opinion of one man might be as good as that of another or of several others. The question of the propriety of their conduct thus stood first. This must modify any judgment that might be formed of his subsequent course and theirs. It might appear that even on the supposition of the correctness of his opinion, his course had been wrong.

Probably in the case as at present complicated, it would appear that he had behaved ill on any supposition regarding the Deacons, but that, until the propriety of their course was decided by the only competent authority—the Church itself—there would not exist the proper means of endeavouring to bring him to repentance. The Pastor then ruled that the first question, and the exclusive one until settled, was that of the conduct of the Deacons: had they in the transaction complained of, done right or wrong? After that was settled, the question would be on what course to take with the erring brother. The Pastor, aware that attempts would be made to bring in side issues, placed emphasis on the restriction to the first question until that was settled. Ere long, in the course of the remarks made by several members, one of them sought to bring in the conduct of the erring brother,—he was called to order: he sought to continue his style of remark,—he was stopped instantly: and on a third time making the attempt, the Pastor's voice was heard ringing through the house the peremptory words, "Sit down, Sir." This sufficed. The remarks proceeded, and the Church came to an unanimous resolve that the Deacons had done right in the thing itself and in the manner of it. The second question was promptly answered for the time by the appointment of visitors to the erring brother to call him to repentance. On learning the decision of the Church as to the conduct of the Deacons, he instantly yielded, asked pardon for his offensive expressions and for being out of his place on the Lord's day, and was found pleasantly again among the brotherhood. Up to the time of the decision of the Church he regarded his opinion as good as that of the Deacons,

and he was not to be moved ; the importance of peremptorily insisting on the settlement of that question by competent authority before any other was allowed to have a place, becomes obvious ; and surely the office of Pastor includes the right and the duty to insist upon such order when the Church is called upon to deliberate with a view to decisive action.

The other illustrative example may be thus described. One of our Church buildings was opened, with the consent of the proper officers, for a temperance convention, which was to occupy it during three days of one week. As the managers of the intended meeting had arranged for singing suitable hymns at the more public meetings each evening, permission was also asked of the proper officers to allow the introduction of a musical instrument for the occasion, to assist the singers belonging to several congregations who had engaged to conduct this part of the services of the proposed Convention. This permission was granted—the instrument was introduced, and during several evenings of the week prior to the convention, there were meetings for practice and rehearsal. The singers who regularly sat in said Church building, and who were members of the Church, were so delighted with the effect of the instrument, that they exclaimed on Saturday evening, " Let us try it to-morrow in the services of the day." Permission was not asked of the Pastor or of any officer of the Church, as it was regarded by the parties in the light of a mere experiment for a single Sabbath. They may be acquitted of all intention to steal a march on the opposers of instrumental music in the house of the Lord.

" The service of song " was led on the next day by the

usual choir, aided by the Melodion, and, as might have been anticipated had sufficient thought been given to the matter, much offence was given to a number of the members, who being natives of Scotland, were utterly opposed to the use of instrumental music in the Church. Others who were not so opposed, strenuously objected to the course which had been taken by the choir and their friends. A requisition to the Pastor and Deacons to call a Church meeting, was promptly got up and signed by a number of members, and as promptly did the delinquents, now sensible of their error, write to the Church a letter of apology, craving forgiveness for having thus acted without permission of the Church, but at the same time asking that the use of the instrument might be continued for a month. They were forgiven, and their request of a single month as a matter of trial granted.

The Pastor announced and delivered a lecture on the question of the Scriptural lawfulness of the use of an instrument to aid the voice in the service of song in the house of the Lord; and soon thereafter a second meeting of the Church was convened, and this affair about which there had been and continued to be no little excitement, was considered. The Pastor stated the facts clearly, and ruled that two separate points had to be considered in the order he would indicate, and as in times of excitement there was danger of confusion arising from the mingling of things which differed, and great danger of rash and uncharitable utterances, unless precise order was kept by the chair, he must peremptorily call to order any brother who departed from the question at the time before the chair. The two questions and their order were as follows:

1. Is the use of instrumental music to aid the voice in the service of song in public worship lawful? This was the question of principle.

2. Shall the Church now adopt this or any other instrument?

The points of forgiving the offenders and of consenting to a trial of the instrument had already been conceded.

The first was discussed with much ability on both sides, but occasionally it was needful to call to order. One speaker in his earnest opposition attempted to impugn the motives and conduct of those who had been forgiven, but he was instantly stopped; another on the verge of the same error was warned off. Irrelevant remarks about this particular instrument or on the expediency of this Church using such an one were checked, as beside the question, which was simply one of principle. At length, on a vote, it was decided by a majority of five-sixths that the principle was sound and Scriptural.

The second question was as promptly decided in the negative. It was of course viewed in the light of present expediency, seeing there was a minority, and there might be difference of sentiment as to the suitableness of the instrument. Its removal was unanimously ordered, and the principle being affirmed, the Pastor and Deacons were requested to bring the matter before the Church for action when they deemed it expedient. Thus far this case is an illustration of the point we are considering;—but it may gratify a natural curiosity to state further, that five months afterwards a numerous signed requisition led to the matter being again submitted to the Church, when, with entire unanimity, a committee was appointed to have charge

of conducting the service of song, and they were instructed to procure a judiciously-selected instrument to aid the voice. They selected an organ, and although nearly sixteen years have since elapsed, the predictions of opponents that it would destroy congregational singing, have been so far from realized, that on the contrary it has greatly augmented the amount and the harmonious effect of such singing. One almost needs to apologise for introducing details so minute, but the design is to make vivid and impressive the fact of the great importance of carefully dividing the points to be considered, settling their order, and then rigidly insisting on compliance with such ruling by the chair.

These hints must suffice in relation to the Pastor. Much will depend on his calmness and self-possession ; not a little on his tact and on the genial kindliness of his manner, and more than all on his sound common sense. So far as the observations of the author extend, by far the largest proportion of difficulties that have arisen in churches may be traced to administrative defects in their Pastors. Not infrequently it is at length seen by the occupant of that office that he has blundered, and that there was a more excellent way, yet does he comfort himself with the thought that something else in the state of the church lay back of his mistake, without which it would have done no harm. There *was* gunpowder, which needed only a spark to explode it. Yes ! but supposing that spark had not been applied, it would not have exploded, and then time and the influences of God's Spirit might have destroyed the gunpowder, the morally chemical nature of the thing lying back of the blunder might have been happily changed.

Much more might be said on the administrative duties of the true ruling elder, namely, the bishop of a Church, did space permit; but some anxiety may be felt in view of what has been said concerning the rights of the brethren to have matters brought before the Church. There is no practical difficulty here; if the Pastor refuses when properly applied to, to bring a question before the Church, one or more brethren have a right to ask the Church whether they will consider the matter. Any wise Pastor would cheerfully state to the Church that it was desired by such and such that the Church should have formally brought before it for its consideration and action such and such a question or fact, and that he the Pastor had declined to allow its introduction for such and such reasons; but that the parties insisted upon their right. Was it, then, the pleasure of the Church to hear them? Did the Church decide to consider this point and act upon it or not? Discussion would be confined to the question, consider or not consider, and the vote would be taken upon that.

Church-meetings are usually held monthly prior to the communion Sabbath; although in some instances they are held more or less frequently, either as the Lord's Supper is more or less frequently observed, or as matters for church consideration and action may arise. It will in many instances be found desirable to hold such meetings at the close of an ordinary religious service, such as a preparatory lecture or prayer-meeting. The minds of members are prepared by religious services for the sacred duties of the assembled church. The members being requested to remain at the close of the more public service, there are found assembled male and female, young and old. With apos-

tolie command before us, "we suffer not a woman to speak in the church," yet has she a vote in the body.* Ordinarily women can find a medium of communication in the voice of some male member, and very often such communications are characterized by no little wisdom. It is well that young members should attend church meetings that they may be trained for their place in Zion; but it admits of question whether minors should have a vote. The first matter requiring attention is the minutes of the last meeting. Nothing can be more obvious than the duty of keeping an accurate record of the proceedings of such a body as a Christian Church. It is usually done most satisfactorily by the pastor, where his relation to the church is likely to be of some tolerable length of time; but where this office is laid down by one and assumed by another with the frequency which is, alas, too common, it is better to have a clerk appointed by the church. When the minutes are confirmed they should be signed by the pastor. They should be written with care, as documents designed to be handed down to posterity; and, of course, they should be free from all insinuation or hint that would unjustly injure any one's character. They ought to be distinguished by clearness, and conciseness.

The minutes of a well managed church will indicate that the principal business of its meetings relates to the reception and dismission of members, and the election of officers and committees. Occasionally delegates have to be appointed. Moreover there are times when the church

* Though this is the common practice in Great Britain and Canada, it is believed that in the United States females do not vote in church meetings generally.

may deem it well to appoint special services of prayer and of instruction and appeal. The Sunday School may require action on the part of the body. It is obvious that order demands attention first to the uncompleted matters on the minutes. Candidates for membership are voted upon. Dismissions are accorded to such as ask for them, and other ordinary points of church business receive attention. It often happens that not a word is said by any one but the pastor, the members merely voting as the questions are called up; at other times brief remarks are made, but church-meetings are not usually of the talking character which many suppose—they are orderly, quiet and dignified; action being taken under a deep sense of responsibility. As we shall see presently, most of the business is prepared for the meeting by some of the committees, and thus much conversation in the larger assembly is not needful.

We have now to go more into detail relating to the several points of the ordinary business of a church-meeting.

CHAPTER IV.

RECEPTION OF MEMBERS.

Their character to be ascertained.—The nature and advantages of a Standing Committee.—Mode of admission.—Confession of Faith.—Covenant.—Forms of these.—How far should a candidate be required to harmonize with the Church in doctrinal and ecclesiastical sentiments.—Church Roll.

If the reception is by profession, the pastor ought in the first place to be satisfied of the spiritual character of the applicant. Candidates should be at least babes in Christ,—born into his kingdom. The church should receive no one without credible evidence of this.* An experience of thirteen years has produced a deep conviction of the advantage of a standing committee in the church to take the initiative in most of the matters that have to be laid before the body. It should be appointed annually, the pastor and deacons being members in virtue of their offices. I have found it a good plan to report the attendance of each member of this committee during the year, at the annual church meeting, when the new election takes place. Such reporting is not only a stimulus to regularity of attendance, but it keeps the church informed of the number of persons from whom emanated the recommendations on which it has been acting.

* On this point reference is made to a tract, "Congregational Tract Series, No. 1," entitled "Purity of Communion, its importance, and the best means of promoting it," written by me and presented to the Union in June 1854.

As to the reception of members, this committee receives from the pastor the names of candidates, and it is its duty to satisfy itself of their character as professed believers in Christ. It may appoint two of its number to visit the candidate, or it may in some cases appoint christian women to act as visitors; or it may in others take a confession in writing; or it may in others ask a conference and examination: whatever course it adopts, its object is to ascertain the fitness of the candidate. This committee reports to the church through the pastor, who always presides at its meetings and keeps a record of them. Any interesting details are, of course, given; and the name, being mentioned also at the Lord's table on the next Sabbath, stands before the church a month for consideration. At its close the church fulfils its duty of voting the party into membership.

On this plan the suffrage is as perfectly maintained as on any other, and the following advantages, among others, recommend its adoption generally:—

1. The mode of examination can be adapted to the age, the sex, the position of the candidate, without exciting any remark on account of departure from a customary practice. The committee takes its own course to obtain the needful information and to satisfy its members that the candidate is a proper person to recommend to the church. It may usually send two of its members as visitors; but any other method is equally open, and often some other is adopted.

2. The care exercised is greater than is usual when two members are appointed in open church-meeting as visitors, who afterwards report at a similar meeting. For, in Committee, there is greater opportunity of putting questions to

the visitors, and otherwise carefully considering evidence. Before the vote of the committee is taken it is usual to kneel in prayer to God for guidance, and thus the whole is done under a solemn impression of responsibility.

3. It often happens when two brethren report in open church-meeting that injudicious remarks are made, and even offensive things said, from sheer want of aptitude to give expression to the views which have been formed: all this is avoided by a careful report of the committee's recommendation given through the pastor.

The vote of the church having been favourable to the candidate, some *form* of admission is usual. It may be by an address from the pastor, with the right hand of fellowship in the name of the church; or an opportunity may be afforded to all the members to grasp the hand of the new-comer. Either of these plans supposes a meeting of the church as such. There is another mode of a more public nature commonly adopted by our churches in the United States and by many in Canada which, on the whole, we prefer. It provides for the open, public profession of one's faith, and it involves a touching and solemn covenanting between the church and its members. As the form which I drew up a number of years ago, and which has been used since in my church, has been frequently asked for, it may be worth while to insert it here. In doing so, however, it is proper to state that we emphatically disclaim all intention of making the adoption of this form a term of communion or of membership. If there is conscientious scruple, or even the shrinking of timidity, we do not insist upon this course, but adopt one less public; yet is it seldom that we are required to do

The candidates for admission having been called out to the front of the Communion Table, they are addressed thus:—

DEARLY BELOVED :

You have presented yourselves before God and this assembly to make a public confession of your religious faith, and to enter into solemn covenant with this Church of Christ. Having diligently inquired into your profession and character, the church has expressed its confidence in you, believing you to hold the following doctrinal sentiments as of Divine authority and as the foundation of Christian faith and practice; and hoping, also, that through grace you have received Jesus Christ, in his several offices, as all your salvation.

Without regarding it as a term of communion, yet seeing you are ready so to do, it is expedient that you should thus *publicly* confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and make a declaration of your faith as here followeth :

DECLARATION OF FAITH.

You believe in one God, essentially wise, holy, just and good; eternal, infinite, and immutable, in all natural and moral perfections; the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe.

You believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and are the only perfect and authoritative rule of faith and practice.

You believe that God is revealed in the Scriptures as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and that to each are attributable the same Divine properties and perfections.

You believe that man was originally holy; that he sinned and fell from that state; that in consequence of the fall, all mankind, in their natural state, are sinners and destitute of holiness; that Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and death, has made an atonement sufficient for the redemption of mankind; that pardon and holiness and everlasting life are sincerely presented to all in the gospel, through repentance towards God and faith towards

our Lord Jesus Christ, and that there is salvation in no other way; that mankind do of their own accord refuse to comply with these terms of mercy, and continue alienated from God, until their hearts, renewed by the influences of the Holy Spirit, are freely given to the Saviour; and that God, in the exercise of sovereign love, from eternity purposed to secure the repentance, sanctification, and final salvation of a great multitude whom no man can number.

You believe in the perpetual obligation of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

You also believe that Christ will finally come to judge the whole human race, according to their works; that the bodies of the dead will be raised again; and that, as the Supreme Judge, he will divide the righteous from the wicked, will receive the righteous into "life everlasting," but send away the wicked into "everlasting punishment."

All these things you truly profess and heartily believe?

(Here the ordinance of baptism is to be administered, unless the candidate was baptized in infancy.)

Thus solemnly confessing your faith in these great verities, you will now, in the fear of God, enter into covenant with this Church of Christ.

THE COVENANT.

In the presence of God, and before his holy Angels and this assembly, you do now profess to give up (yourselves) to God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in an everlasting covenant, solemnly avouching him to be your God, cheerfully consecrating all your powers and faculties to his service and glory, and engaging, in reliance on his promised grace, to love and obey him for ever.

You also promise, in reliance upon the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to walk with this, one of his churches, in a due submission to, and attendance upon, all the orders and ordinances of the gospel. More particularly, you declare that you will strive earnestly for its peace, edification and purity; will

cherish a lively interest in its concerns; will conscientiously devote your gifts, graces and abilities, in an orderly and modest way, to its service; will cordially submit to its rules of government and discipline; will avail yourselves of its public and social religious services, so far as practicable; and will aim to adorn your profession by a holy, blameless and fruitful life.

These things do you promise in dependance on the grace of God?

(The Pastor now says:—"The members of the Church will be pleased to rise.")

You have thus witnessed a good confession before many witnesses; and *we*, the pastor and members of this church, affectionately receive you to our communion, and in the name of our Divine Master declare you entitled to all its privileges. We welcome you to this fellowship with us in the blessings of the gospel; and, on our part, pledge you our confidence, our sympathy and our prayers. The Lord graciously helping us, we will henceforth regard you as brought up with us in the fellowship of the saints. We will watch over you, not for your halting, but for your edification. We will sacredly regard your character and good name. We will counsel, reprove, comfort and exhort you, as your circumstances and our acquaintance with them shall require.

And now, beloved, it is our earnest hope that you are no more strangers and followers, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,—Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. In him may this building, fitly framed together, grow into an holy temple in the Lord; and in it, may you be builded for a habitation of God, through the Spirit. Amen.

When members are received by letter from sister churches, the document is read in church meeting, and some method adopted of introducing them to the brotherhood. In some churches they are received publicly in the

same way as on profession, except that they simply enter into covenant, and do not make profession of their faith, that having been done by them already.

There is a point of some interest which is not now discussed, namely, as to the degree of harmony in the doctrinal and ecclesiastical views of the candidate, with those of the church as a whole, which may be deemed essential in order to membership. Our churches in the mother country have been generally opposed to insisting on subscription to a written creed, though they have looked for soundness in the faith. For ourselves, clear and full evidence of godliness has been satisfactory, even when there have been defects in doctrinal sentiments, and mistake on ecclesiastical questions. The church is a good training-school, so that parties who, loving the Lord Jesus, enter with some darkness as to the teaching of scripture on theological and church questions, usually obtain increase of light. The result is a remarkable harmony in the views of our churches. With no formal confession of faith insisted upon, they can unite in such a Declaration of Faith, Church Order and Discipline, as will be found at the end of this little volume.

The only other remark needful on the reception of members is that their names should be carefully placed upon the church roll. This document should contain columns for the number :—No. Males. No. Females. Names. Designation. Whether by profession or letter. Date of Admission. Date and Reasons of Removal.

CHAPTER V.

DISMISSION OF MEMBERS.

Always with consent of Church.—Letter of Dismission.—Forms.—Rule as to those who have been gone a year without leaving ecclesiastical trace; also as to members living near Sister Churches.—Withdrawal of Members.

No name should ever be removed from the church roll without the formal consent of the church, in church meeting assembled. This rule is of great importance, and should never, on any pretence whatever, be violated. A name cannot be placed there without the expressed will of the church; and, apart from its authority, no one has a right to take it off. There is no difficulty in an ordinary application for dismissal to another church: it is mentioned to the church at its ordinary meeting, and granted.

FORM OF A LETTER OF DISMISSION.

This certifies that _____ is a member in good and regular standing of the Congregational Church assembling in _____, and that he is at his own request, and with consent of the assembled brethren, hereby dismissed and commended to the fellowship of any sister church (or any church of our Lord Jesus Christ) (or of the church in _____, under the pastoral care of _____).

In name and on behalf of the church.

_____, Pastor.

ANOTHER FORM.

The Congregational (or Independent) Church assembling in _____, to their sister church in _____, under the pastoral care of _____, sendeth greeting.

Whereas our brother _____, or sister _____, being a member of this church, in good and regular standing, desires a letter of dismission to your fellowship. This is cordially to commend him (or her) thereunto; and, when received by you, his (or her) special connexion with us will cease. May grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Given in church meeting, _____ day of _____, 18—.

_____, Pastor.

But it frequently occurs that members remove to a distance, perhaps, without notice given; or if on their first removal they give notice, there is a second or a third removal effected, so that all trace of the party is lost. In other cases the removal is to the neighbourhood of a sister church, which, however, they do not wish to join, and therefore desire to retain their membership of the church from whose services they have necessarily withdrawn. This last should be peremptorily refused. Cases are known of parties who have lived near and communed with Congregational Churches in Canada for many years, and who yet persist in retaining their connexion with the church in New England from which they originally came. In our judgment that church ought to insist on dismissing them. It will be found a good rule, to be formally adopted and placed on record by every church, that when members have removed for a year without affording information of their whereabouts, their names should be mentioned to the church for erasure from the roll one month, and the era-

Pastor.

sure ordered the next month. Of this rule every member should have information. Again, the same rule should include the sending of letters of dismissal, whether desired or not, to neighbouring churches, to those who have gone to reside in their vicinity. A church roll should be kept free from names over whom watch and care cannot be exercised.

Occasionally, the question comes up of a member's right to withdraw from a church on the ground of difference in doctrines; or of irreconcilable difference with the pastor or some of the members; or of some one of many causes that may lead to such a determination. The following actual cases will illustrate what is now meant:—A was a young man of unexceptionable moral and religious character, the son of a pious father, as we hope, but who was a doctrinal and ecclesiastical Ishmaelite. This young man united with one of our churches on profession of his faith, and walked consistently with his profession. After some years, under obvious influences, he became so very high a Calvinist that his Calvinistic pastor's sermons did not suit him. He could not continue to listen to them. There was no other church which he would think of joining; his purpose was to listen to those who, in small assemblies without church organization, dilated on these views of scripture. Every effort was used to show him his error, but without avail; he insisted on withdrawing from the church. B was a man of irreproachable character, and, it is hoped, of true piety. He fell, however, into a morbid state of mind,—his sanity being occasionally doubtful,—and the fact of his church connexion was, because of his estimate of its responsibility, a species of bugbear which did but increase

his darkness of soul. He declined to commune, and insisted on withdrawal from membership. He purposed to remain as a worshipper in the congregation, but nothing could persuade him to continue his connexion with the church. C was a person of high character, the head of a family. In some transactions between him and the pastor there was, in his judgment, a want of straight-forwardness, and, losing confidence, he declined to attend his ministry, and wished to withdraw from the church. There can be no doubt that it was his duty to have dealt with the supposed evil in accordance with the law of Christ; but, shrinking from the responsibility of disturbing the church, he refused to say wherefore he declined to attend the ministry; and inasmuch as he was not prepared to take a dismission to any other church, he insisted on withdrawal.—In all these cases the parties were “in good and regular standing,” when their desire to withdraw was made known and persisted in.

Let it be understood then, as assumed, that the member desiring to withdraw is in good standing, and is in no wise exposed to disciplinary action. It is also assumed that he peremptorily declines to take a dismission to another church. It is supposed that due means are employed to bring the party to a happier state of mind; but they fail to shake his resolve to withdraw. What is to be done? The current doctrine of our churches is that he cannot be permitted to do this. Once in the church always in it, save removal by death, dismission, or excommunication. This is not the judgment of the author. The union originally with the church was voluntary—the bond of union is love—and hence he who voluntarily enters may retire if

he will do so. It sadly lowers the dignity of a church, and destroys the solemnity of excision, to use it as a species of kick at a member on going out, whose departure cannot be prevented. In the primitive churches there were cases of this voluntary going out. "*They went out from us,*" says the Apostle; distinctly enough intimating that "they were not of us." In reply to the usual objection, "You cannot dismiss a church member to the world," it is enough to say that you do not dismiss him at all. The act is entirely his own, of which you merely take cognizance by removing his name from the roll. Such cases are exceptional, and are to be dealt with as such: they are morbid in their nature, and need special treatment. Most emphatically do we counsel the avoidance of active discipline in such cases: it can do no good; and almost invariably not only aggravates the disease, but sadly lowers the dignity of the physician.

CHAPTER VI.

DISCIPLINE.

Design of discipline.—Committee of inquiry.—The act most sacred and to be solemnly performed.—Case of excision of Pastor and a minority by a majority.—What are properly matters for discipline.—Must be a case of wrong established.—Disputes as such not for Church action.—A case.—Observations of Rev. J. A. James, and Robert Hall.

One has only to consider the *design* of this department of a church's work to make prominent the fact that most grievous mistakes are often made, involving the worst consequences. *What is that design?* Obviously the purity of the church, and the recovery of the offender. In order that its holy light may shine, the purity of the church must be conserved; and for the same reason, as also that its work may be faithfully done, every effort is to be made for the recovery of the fallen. Discipline throughout, therefore, must be conducted in *love*. There should appear, as in the case of a wise and loving parent, an unwillingness to chastise, and yet a sacred compulsion to perform a painful duty.

In view of the design, it will appear in the highest degree improper to have any act or process of discipline initiated by other than the officers of the church. No irregularity is more monstrous, or fraught with worse consequences, than for a member of the church to arise in church meeting, and bring a charge against another. Such

disorder should be checked instantly, and, should it be unhappily necessary, with a positive decision that must close the mouth at once. If the church has a standing committee the inquiry which necessarily precedes an act of discipline may be assigned to it; if not, a committee should be invariably appointed specially for the case. The pastor announces to the church that an inquiry is needful, and nominates a committee, including, of course, himself, to investigate. It is the business of that committee to ascertain facts with the utmost care, and having sifted everything thoroughly, they report to the church all that is needful in the way of facts to guide its judgment. The pastor expounds the requirement of the law of Christ in the case, and the whole matter is left for the action of the next church meeting. The delay, which need not be of many days, or which may be of a month, is demanded for the attainment of two objects:—1st, That all doubts about facts may be set at rest by private inquiry of members of the committee; and 2nd, That the church may have opportunity to consider the law of the Master in such a case. It will be found practically an important rule never to have *facts* questioned or discussed in a church meeting. The members of committee will always amend their report if any member of the church can furnish them, during the delay allowed, with such evidence of their misapprehension as shall require it: and *a church meeting is no place to ascertain facts.*

The decisions of a church, whether it be suspension, rebuke, or excommunication, should be carried into effect amid most solemn prayer and other sacred services. There have been doubts whether suspension from communion be

a proper act; because, if a man be guilty, something more definite and final is called for. The design of discipline being the purity of the church and the benefit of the offender, is, as it seems to us, often best served by a temporary suspension. It is a *definite*, though not a final act, and it has a merciful aspect. It is particularly appropriate where time is required to test the fact of the abandonment of an evil practice. Excommunication should be pronounced with great deliberation and solemnity. Prayer for Divine guidance and sanction,—the reading of the 5th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians,—and supplication for the gracious result of the act therein mentioned, namely, the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved,—should form prominent parts of the act. It is a sad and disgraceful thing when excision is rashly or flipperantly performed. Church censures are too sacred a thing, have in them too much of real solemnity, to be conducted in a manner that makes them a laughing-stock, as alas, is sometimes the case. A church has been known to excommunicate its excellent pastor, and an intelligent and pious minority, who agreed with him and went out with him. Of course they went out and formed another church, and thus the act of excision was treated with deserved contempt. Other churches found no difficulty in holding fraternal intercourse with the new organization. How much to be deplored is it that churches should ever so conduct discipline as to reduce it in their movements to an absurdity and wickedness!

Before passing from this subject a word of caution may not be misplaced as to what are properly matters for discipline. It is plain that every sin is not such matter,

for we all sin continually, and, in the sight of the Lord, our best services are tainted with defect. Every disciple of Christ finds daily reason to confess his iniquities before the Lord. We sin in thought, and word, and deed. We sin against God, and often also against our fellows. Therefore if all sin were matter of discipline the churches would have to hold a perpetual assize. This, however, is outside its province, and obviously impracticable. The question hence arises, *What sins* demand the disciplinary action of the church? to which perhaps the best answer is, those involving open scandal; and repentance, including abandonment of which, may be demanded. This rule would exclude some things which many disciples of Christ consider sore evils. It would exclude the act of union in marriage with an unbeliever, because you could not demand repentance and abandonment. It would also exclude some social practices, the occasional indulgence in which is not matter of scandal, because of wide and general difference of opinion as to their propriety. Reference is here made to the practice of decorous dancing in private domestic assemblies,—the use of alcoholic beverages in the ordinary habits of life,—the indulgence in gay attire,—and a multitude of other things that might be mentioned. It would further exclude bankruptcy, unless some direct charge of moral wrong is made against the bankrupt, inasmuch as in the present state of society, bankruptcy, in itself, does not involve scandal, for it is often the result of circumstances over which the bankrupt has no control. All cases legitimately calling for discipline involve a charge of moral delinquency in the culprit's relations to his fellow-men. For when a man indulges in a fractious and turbulent temper, disturbing the peace and

breaking the unity of the church, he is guilty of moral delinquency in his relations to his fellow-men. Accordingly no case is in a position for church interference until there is at least a charge of evil. Special emphasis is placed upon this, because the interference of the church is often asked in the wrong place. Where there is a question who is wrong between two or more members, the adjustment of that point belongs not to the church, but to referees, either *ex-parte* or mutually chosen. An illustrative case may be here given. Two valued brethren, deacons of the church, announced to its pastor that a third brother, a member of the church, was treating a claim they had against him, as trustees of the estate of a deceased member of the church, most unrighteously, and that after every effort they had failed to induce him to do right; and they requested the immediate interposition of the church. He deserved to be cut off for his contumacy. The inquiry was made if there was any dispute in the case, to which the answer was in the affirmative. The supposed delinquent did not agree with his accusers as to what was right. The pastor at once said that there was no case for church action until the supposed delinquent had been shown to be in the wrong by the decision of impartial referees. The sixth chapter of 1st Corinthians was referred to, and its directions were noted. The correctness of this decision was at once acknowledged: referees were chosen,—they adjudicated,—and there was no need whatever for the action of the church. Ordinarily the instructions of our Lord, recorded in Matthew 18, meet the case; according to which the interference of the church is not called for until the point is settled who is in the wrong; and the work of the church is to insist upon the

wrong-doer making reparation. It may be laid down as an invariable rule, that a church is never called upon to decide between two disputants, but only to see to it that the one proved by other agencies than itself to be to blame, shall fulfil his duty to the party he has injured.

It is of unspeakable moment to the peace, purity, and general welfare of a church that the greatest caution be used in the initiation, and then in the carrying through, of measures of discipline; and yet that there be no shrinking at any point, or because of any consideration, from a loving but fearless procedure to whatever the laws of the kingdom demand. It was not my intention to increase the number of these pages by quotations from other authors; but an exception seems desirable on this point of discipline, as the observations of the Rev. J. A. James and of the late Robt. Hall are so much to the point, and so eminently clear and forcible:—Mr. James says:

“By discipline is meant the right treatment of offending members. The church which neglects this duty resembles a state in which the administration of justice is omitted, and crime is permitted to be practised with impunity. That part of the design of the church union which consists in mutual watchfulness, is lost; backsliders are encouraged to go farther astray; hypocrites are patronised in their self-delusion; the ruin of men’s souls abetted; the society is corrupted; and the honour of religion is compromised. It is this sin which the apostle describes in those awful words, “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” The passage of scripture connected with this appears to me to be generally misunderstood, 1 Cor. iii., 12–15. It has been usual to interpret this passage in reference to doctrines, but I think the true view of it would refer it to persons. The apostle is referring to the church, which he calls the temple of the Lord: now the church consists of *persons*, not

of *doctrines*: to defile the church by incorporating improper materials, must consist therefore of adding improper persons to its communion: akin to this must be the sin of keeping such persons in fellowship after they are proved to be unworthy. The advantages of discipline are obvious and numerous. It reclaims backsliders, it detects hypocrites, it circulates a secret and salutary awe through the church, supplies an additional incentive to watchfulness and prayer, by exhibiting at once the most affecting proofs of human frailty, and the painful consequences resulting from its exposure; while in addition, it is a public testimony borne by the church against all unrighteousness.

I. Let us consider what offences should become the subject of discipline.

1. Of course, all scandalous vices and immoralities. 1 Cor. v. 11-13.

2. The denying of essential articles of the Christian faith, and persisting in the error. Gal. i. 8. 2 Tim. ii. 17-21. 1 Tim. vi. 3-5. 2 John x. 11. Every church has an indubitable right of determining for themselves what they consider to be fundamental truths; they should, however, be extremely cautious not to set up other terms of communion than those which are established in the word of God.

3. Disturbing the peace of the church in any way. Tim. iii. 10. The word here translated "heretic" signifies rather the author and leader of a party, a factious person. Gal. v. 12. Rom. xi. 17. 2 Thess. iii. 6. A factious temper, when united with reputed sanctity, is the most dangerous character that can exist in a Christian society. A great mistake has been made by some in the supposition that immorality only is a proper subject of discipline; but surely a man whose troublesome and turbulent temper disturbs the peace and breaks the unity of the church is a far more dangerous man than he who has committed sin. In all societies, whether civil or sacred, a man whose conduct disturbs, divides, and does much actually to dissolve the society, ought to be put away. The very end of society is

fellowship, and to retain one who actually subverts the very design of association is a monstrous absurdity.

4. Suffering near relatives to want the necessities of life when able to relieve them. 1 Tim. v. 8.

5. Living in a state of irreconcilable enmity with any of the brethren, and refusing to make suitable concessions for an injury inflicted. Matt. xviii. 17.

II. The *manner of proceeding* in cases of discipline.

There are many things of which no other notice should be taken than the private admonition of one member to another. If this does not produce the desired effect, the pastor should be acquainted with the fact. In most cases the addition of his admonition will be sufficient to produce a spirit of contrition. It must be entrusted to the pastor's discretion to decide what matters shall be brought under the review of the society. If the sin be attended with much aggravation and be generally known, it is his duty to mention it to the church. Should the offender confess the fact and manifest satisfactory proofs of contrition, a simple and affectionate admonition to him to go and sin no more, is sufficient. The church should be satisfied, and restore him forthwith to their confidence. But if he be obstinate—if he either deny the charge or palliate his sin,—it would be proper to appoint two or three discreet individuals to enquire into the fact, and to endeavour to bring him to repentance. At the time the deputation is appointed, a resolution ought to be passed, suspending the individual from the privileges of communion. Time after time he should be visited by the pastor and admonished; and if after one, or two, or three months, he should confess his offence, and discover satisfactory contrition, he should without delay be restored to the confidence and communion of the church. But after waiting a reasonable time, and waiting in vain, for any marks of repentance, the church should proceed to separate him from their communion. His contumacy has immeasurably aggravated his original offence. In some cases where the crime is highly scandalous, and very notorious, it is necessary for the honor of religion, the credit of the society,

and the good of the offender, to *proceed immediately to excommunication*, as soon as the fact is clearly proved. By excommunication we mean an entire separation of the offender from all relation to the church whatever, and an utter exclusion from its privileges. The sentence of excommunication should never be proceeded to by the church but with the greatest caution and seriousness; it should be accompanied with sorrowful and humble confession of the delinquent's sin, and earnest prayer that it may have a suitable effect upon his mind, and the minds of others: it should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, and not as an act of the church's own authority: it should have an immediate reference to the ends of church fellowship, and the benefit of the offender; it should be unattended with any emotions of wrath, malice, party spirit, or personal resentment; in short, from the beginning to the end of the fearful proceeding there should be a manifestation of all that deliberation, discretion, seriousness, grief, and awe which this solemn act of excision seems naturally to demand.

Mr. Hall's description of the nature and usefulness of excommunication is very striking:—"I am far from thinking lightly of the spiritual power with which Christ has armed his Church. It is a high and mysterious one, which has no parallel on earth. Nothing in the order of means is equally adapted to awaken compunction in the guilty with spiritual censures impartially administered; the sentence of excommunication in particular, harmonising with the dictates of conscience, and re-echoed by her voice, is truly terrible; it is the voice of God speaking through its legitimate organ, which he who despises, or neglects, ranks with 'heathen men and publicans,' joins the synagogue of Satan, and takes his lot with an unbelieving world, doomed to perdition.—Excommunication is a sword which, strong in its apparent weakness, and the sharper and more keenly edged for being divested of all sensible and exterior developements, lights immediately on the spirit, and inflicts a wound which no balm can cure, no ointment can mollify, but which must continue to ulcerate and burn, till healed by the blood of atonement, applied

by penitence and prayer. In no instance is that axiom more fully verified 'the weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men,' than in the discipline of his church. By encumbering it with foreign aid they have robbed it of its real strength; by calling in the aid of temporal pains and penalties, they have removed it from the spirit to the flesh, from its contact with eternity, to unite it to secular interests; and as the corruption of the best things is the worst, have rendered it the scandal and reproach of our holy religion.

"While it retains its character as a spiritual ordinance, it is the chief bulwark against the disorders which threaten to overturn religion, the very nerve of virtue, and next to the preaching of the cross, the principle antitode to the 'corruptions that are in the world through lust.' Discipline in a church occupies the place of laws in a state; and as a kingdom, however excellent its constitution, will inevitably sink into a state of extreme wretchedness, in which laws are either not enacted, or not duly administered; so a church which pays no attention to discipline, will either fall into confusion, or into a state so much worse, that little or nothing remains worth regulating. The right of inflicting censures, and of proceeding in extreme cases to excommunication, is an essential branch of that power with which the church is endowed, and bears the same relation to discipline that the administration of criminal justice bears to the general principles of government. When this right is exerted in upholding the 'faith once delivered to the saints,' or enforcing a conscientious regard to the laws of Christ, it maintains its proper place, and is highly beneficial. Its cognizance of doctrine is justified by apostolic authority; 'a heretic after two or three admonitions, reject; nor is it to any purpose to urge the difference between ancient heretics and modern, or that to pretend to distinguish truth from error is a practical assumption of infallibility."

We are commanded to withdraw from all religious association with excommunicated persons. We are not even to sit down with them at an ordinary meal, nor freely converse with them

on secular affairs, except they are our relations, or we are necessarily thrown by the contingencies of business into their society. They are not however to be utterly forsaken and abandoned. The pastor and members should seek opportunities to admonish and warn them: "peradventure God may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." 2 Thess. iii. 14-15. 1 Cor. v. 11. Upon their penitence and reformation, they should be again received into communion, with compassion and love, joy and gratitude. No member should be allowed to resign, in order to avoid expulsion. Great care should be taken by a church to display the most inflexible impartiality in the exercise of discipline. We can scarcely conceive of anything more displeasing in the sight of God, anything more likely to bring down his fearful indignation upon a church, than to allow his temple to be defiled, out of compliment to secular distinctions."

CHAPTER VII.

FINANCES.

Our circumstances different from those of early christians.—Buildings.—Trustees.—Deacons.—Elastic Machinery.—System promptitude and energy in raising funds.—Different methods.—“The weekly offering.”—The whole matter sacred.—Personal attention demanded.

This is a part of church business which in our climate is practically of great importance in regard to the details of which we can derive but little light from the New Testament. The primitive churches, of whose management we there read, had no church buildings with pews, and pulpits; they were in the condition of our persecuted non-conformist forefathers who gathered together wheresoever they could find a nook for worship and communion. The synagogue indeed existed in many of the towns and cities into which the apostles carried the message of salvation, and they often preached in them, but the majority of the Jewish people were wont to oppose the truth, and hence the christian assemblies had to be gathered elsewhere. Our circumstances are totally dissimilar and of course demand arrangements adjusted to them. Our churches usually worship in edifices more or less costly, some of them encumbered with debt, and all needing to be kept in a state of repair.* We dwell in a climate re-

* It is of the greatest consequence not only that such edifices should be in trust, but that the Trust Deed should be carefully

quiring that these edifices should be artificially warmed at a greater or less expense, and our habits also demand the use in most of them of artificial light. In short, there are considerable expenses, and not a little responsibility incurred in connexion with the edifice itself, and its neat and comfortable state for the occupancy of the congregation. And then there is a totally distinct thing which would be required even if worship was conducted under the canopy of heaven, or in dens or caves of the mountains, namely, the maintenance of the Pastor, and attention to the wants of the poor of the flock. Thus is there a natural division of pecuniary wants into two classes,—those which relate to the comfortable accommodation of the Congregation and those which are in fulfilment of the scriptural requirement, “let him that is taught in the world communicate to him that teacheth in all good things,” and of the further duty of remembering the poor.

In order to hold the building legally, trustees must be appointed by the body assembling therein, who are responsible for its preservation. It seems a natural course therefore to place the management of funds connected strictly with the edifice in their hands, defining their duties, requiring them to keep minutes of their meetings, and to report to the Church once or twice or four times a year. This limits attention to the pecuniary matters of this department to one, two or four Church meetings in the year. Strictly interpreted the duties of the Deacon's

drawn up, and that it should be registered as a Trust Deed according to law, and *within the time peremptorily required by the law*. Will not some person or persons in all our churches see how this matter stands?

office include the raising of money for the maintenance of the Pastor and for needful aid to the poor of the flock. They should report at the same meeting or meetings. It seems expedient and at least delicate that during that part of such meeting in which these pecuniary matters are reported and considered, the Pastor should vacate the chair and retire, calling ere he does so, some suitable person to occupy it.

It so occurs in many congregations that a large portion of the funds employed for the support of the pastorate arises out of the building in which they meet and worship and is thus managed by the Trustees: but the case is easily met by requiring them to pay over to the Deacons the amount needed for the Pastor. The fund for the poor of the church is always special, collected at the Lord's table, and is managed by Pastor and Deacons. There is room for *elastic* arrangements in this department of a church's action. It is well to have occasional infusion of fresh blood in their management. Many can do this well who are not qualified for the diaconate, and so long as the church demands reports and keeps the control, no principle is involved. We are in favour of great freedom of arrangement in order to great efficiency.

It is very sad when the comfort and efficiency of the Pastor and the interests of the church are sacrificed to the incompetency of a financial officer, and yet how often is this the case! While it is plainly the duty of Deacons to see that the Pastor has sufficient for his comfortable maintenance in his position, it does not follow that they are always the best persons to raise the funds. We suspect that it will be found generally preferable to place this

work in the hands of a Board of Trustees or Financial Committee. It is not our custom to change our Deacons frequently, but it is well that the active work of raising funds should have often introduced to it young and energetic spirits.

In this matter of raising funds, system promptitude and energy are of the utmost importance. Untold and uncalculable are the miseries which have been endured by valued pastors and their families for want of these elements in the financial management of churches. It would be a good rule which obtains in many of our churches in Scotland, to pay the Pastor his quarter's stipend invariably in advance. It places in his hand wherewith to live during the quarter without involving himself in debt.

The methods adopted to raise the necessary funds for the support of the ministry and for defraying all other expenses, are various, perhaps necessarily so. In rural districts subscription lists are circulated, and the subscribers often pay "in kind" themselves, to the Minister. In other places pew rents are paid, additional subscriptions are entered into by liberal individuals, and quarterly collections are made. According to this plan the Pastor receives his stipend from a financial officer, and usually it is a fixed sum, which is made up if there be arrears by the more interested and liberal members of the congregation. There is, however, in our judgment a more excellent way, which has been successfully tried in many places, and which is becoming practicable even in rural districts, since the extension of the system of Railways with the consequent facility of transporting produce, has in most places superseded the old plan of barter in ordinary transactions, by cash

payments. The plan may be designated "the weekly offering." Instead of pew rents and annual subscriptions, the occupants of sittings subscribe so much per week according to their ability; which sum they bring up to the house of the Lord on the Lord's day and deposit it in the appointed place. The secretary, or secretary-treasurer keeps an accurate list of subscribers names with the the amount they have promised. He supplies each with a small paper or canvass bag with the subscriber's name upon it. The money is placed in this small bag and deposited. During the ensuing week the financial officer counts the money, credits the sum to each name, and returns the little bags to the accustomed seat in the church. A month's arrears call for a short printed notice of the fact which is placed with the bag in the pew. If preference be mentioned at the outset for a less frequent payment it is noted, and expected only monthly or quarterly, as promised. According to this plan, seats are not paid for, but money is subscribed directly for the support of the institutions of religion. There is no difficulty in allocating seats or pews, though on this plan no one has any right, real or understood, to more room than he occupies, and thus you cannot have a church edifice half empty, yet not a seat to be had, because all are let.

The advantages of this plan are, 1st. Simplicity and efficiency. A weekly contribution is not large; it can be spared easily; and being frequently given, a good habit is formed. These weekly offerings are efficient because without the labour of collecting they supply the exchequer of the church regularly. 2nd. It is equitable. It often happens that a poor man has a large family who require

considerable church room, and yet have little pecuniary means. On the other hand a man without family and requiring only a single sitting, has ample means. Now it is fair that the latter should give very much more than the former, which he does upon this plan, and does not upon the pew rent system. 3rd. It is more manifestly a religious act when, instead of paying the collector as if an ordinary account, the money is brought to the house of the Lord. It seems to be more in harmony with apostolic direction, 1. Cor. 16, than the other method.

Before bringing our observations on the church meeting to a close, it should be noted that their whole transactions are sacred, even where money is in the case; the treasury is that of the Lord; so that throughout they should be conducted in a spiritual frame of mind, and with that reverence, sobriety, and propriety which befit every part of the work in the Lord's Kingdom. In this view, moreover, they should command the attendance of all so far as possible, and their decisions should be regarded as final. Every one has an opportunity of expressing his opinion, every one may request delay, it is therefore a wrong done to the brotherhood to be silent in church meeting, allow decision to be made without remark, and then to go forth and complain of what is done. Such grumblers should never be listened to. The simple fact that having the right to oppose, they neglected its exercise at the proper time, should effectually put them to silence.

CHAPTER VIII.

DUTIES OF OFFICERS.

They are chosen and appointed to perform specific duties : are not to be incessantly directed ; but may be called to account for mal-administration. The duties of the Christian ministry so multiform and onerous that assistance in visiting is needed. Deacons suitable assistants. Further duties of Deacons.

The several officers of a church are chosen and appointed for the performance of certain duties according to the best of their ability. The Pastor preaches the word, administers ordinances, visits the sick, watches over and is the friend of all, and is the ruling elder. The Deacons care for the poor, serve the Lord's table, are the natural council of the Pastor, and see that he is properly supported. The Trustees take care of the Church building, and perhaps are appointed to raise the funds for current expenses according to a prescribed method. The Standing Committee, if there be one, has its appropriate duties ; and so likewise has that which consists of the Superintendent and Teachers of the Sunday School, and of the Pastor and Deacons. If there be an Officer of Literature and a Committee on Missions, they have assigned to them such duties as their designation indicates.

It will be found of some practical importance to have it understood that these officers are not to be incessantly directed and instructed as to what they shall do, but are to be expected to use their own judgment and their best en-

deavours in their several departments. While *hints* properly and respectfully given are always acceptable to men of sense, *directions* are out of order. If they fail in the fulfilment of their duties, or if, in any case, they exceed their powers, they are amenable to the censure of the church, to which they are responsible. A careful attention to this rule will either shut out many profitless discussions, or, if these subjects must have attention, will bring them in the true shape before the church. Thus, on the question what precise kind of wine ought to be used at the Lord's table, it places the responsibility on the deacons; they are not instructed on the subject, but act according to their best judgment, and the question can come before the church only as a complaint against them for not using the proper article; and it rests with the church to say whether it will entertain the complaint. On the same principle it would be out of order to instruct the minister what sermons he should preach, how many visits he should pay per day or per week, and how he should expend his time; but there may arise causes of complaint on any or all of these accounts, which the church has plainly a right to consider. In their management of what is commonly termed "the fellowship fund," namely, that collected at the Lord's table for the poor of the flock, it would be unseemly to *direct* the pastor and deacons, but they must give an account of their stewardship, and then their course may be called in question. These illustrations of the working of the principle may suffice.

The duties of the Christian ministry in these days are so multiform and onerous in many instances, and yet the wants of the churches are so many and paramount, that

there needs some adjustment of the matter which will provide suitable assistance. In addition to the public exposition of the Scriptures and the preaching of the Gospel, to do which in a manner demanded by the state of society in the present day requires a large amount of reading and meditation, the Christian minister has laid upon him a large amount of public business. The Committees of Missionary, Bible, Tract, Sunday School, Temperance, and other Societies require his attendance, and usually devolve upon him no little work. Public meetings are multiplied amid the activities of these days, and public lectures are demanded on scientific, historical, or literary subjects, in all which things he is expected to take a part. The press also opens to him a field of usefulness, and his pen is put in requisition for the printed sheet. Meanwhile the sick and dying must be frequently visited; inquirers must be met and guided; the counsellor and friend of the flock has to afford advice on various subjects continually being presented to him; the young have to receive his special attentions; and beyond all this not a few members of his flock complain if he is not frequently a visitor in their houses.

Now it is plainly impossible that a pastor of a church and congregation of any considerable size can perform the other highly important duties mentioned and be at the same time a frequent visitor, except of the sick. The expectations of many people on this point are most thoughtless and unreasonable. And yet a considerable amount of visiting is needful in order to keep in action the lively sympathies of the members and to bind the body together. What, then, is to be done? Perhaps a plurality of pastors may be suggested to meet the case; and doubt-

less there are instances in which this measure would be sufficient and the best. But there are others in which the aid is not wanted in preaching, or in any department other than visiting, and we fail to see why this may not be most satisfactorily rendered by the deacons. It would be waste of time to debate the question whether such work belongs to their office. One thing is manifest,—they are chosen because possessed of qualifications which really fit them for this work, and, even as private members having such qualifications, they ought to render the required aid. But there is an obvious advantage in official visiting,—the church is in some sort represented in the act, and, while it need not be less kindly, genial, and informal, it is usually more effective.

There is obvious appropriateness in the Pastor and Deacons meeting together at stated periods for conference on the interests of the church. They also naturally attend to the supply of the pulpit during a vacancy, or when the pastor is absent. They either preside, in the person of one of their number, at prayer meetings when the pastor is not present, or they commit the duty to one of their brethren not in office. As already indicated, it would be a waste of space to argue the question of the precise limitation of their *official* duties: if these things are not strictly among them, they are duties nevertheless incumbent on men who have the needful qualifications to perform them and who have been chosen to office by their brethren.

CHAPTER IX.

CONCLUSION.

Training Members.—Seeking out young men for Christian Ministry.—Their Ordination.—Form of Certificate.—Excellence of our polity.—Our Glorious Ancestry.—Dwight's Hymn.

An Essay on the internal administration of the churches might be supposed to include a directory for public worship and for the observance of the sacraments, also such remarks on the preaching of the word as might occur to the author's mind. But such points are not within the design of this little volume, and they are treated with much ability by writers whose works are readily accessible. Besides, there is nothing peculiar to Congregationalism in these departments of the Lord's service.

There is one subject, however, which must have brief notice, namely the training of members of the church in the exercise of their gifts, and the selection and training of young men for the christian ministry. Meetings for conference and prayer, and the services of the Sunday School, afford favourable opportunities for calling out the brethren to lead in prayer, and to offer a word of exhortation. There ought to be much attention paid to this matter in order that a numerous body of disciples may be trained for usefulness wherever they may be placed. In a country such as this where removals are frequent, and men are scattered throughout the land among people, many of whom may have had few advantages, it is specially im-

portant that our churches should be efficient training schools, and that they should send forth their members into these new places and circumstances qualified to take the lead in every good work.

Equally if not more momentous are the interests involved in the training for the christian ministry of suitable young men. Because as a rule we must have a ministry of thorough education, the period during which the point is to be decided whether a young christian is to become a minister, is short. In ordinary cases that decision must be made by the time he is of age or at least soon afterwards. Should he marry and settle in connexion with business or with some other profession, it is unlikely that he will ever think of the ministry. There are exceptions to this statement, but they only confirm the rule. Accordingly it is fitting that pastors, deacons, and others should draw forth young men for the purpose of testing their abilities and of awaking in them a desire for this good and great work. While deprecating with all solemnity attempts to send forth men into the christian ministry whom the Lord does not call, for such are worse than useless, yet it must not be lost sight of that the Lord works by means, and often awakens the irrepressible desire which is one of the elements of a call, by the timely suggestions of christian brethren. If correct in our estimate, a call to the ministry consists of four elements, namely, personal piety, competent ability intellectual and physical, an irrepressible desire for the work, and an opening in the arrangements of Divine providence. There are undoubtedly many who have the piety and the capacity, and for whom God's providence opens a path, who have no desire for the ministry

and who do not enter it. Surely that desire might be awakened and kept alive in not a few, if suitable means were employed, and continuous prayer offered. We are instructed "to pray the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." It is to be feared that there is much neglect in this department which greatly needs repentance and reformation.

It is our excellent custom to require the formal recommendation of the church of which he is a member in order to the admission of a young man into a course of preparatory training. This recommendation is not only of character, but contains the judgment of the church as to his fitness for the contemplated work. There is no little responsibility connected with such recommendation. The young brother must needs be tried in the Sunday school, in the prayer meeting and in any other suitable way so that the church may pronounce its judgment intelligently. The matter is in all its bearings so momentous that it would justify the appointment of a special committee of the church in every case, to have more frequent and intimate conference with the young brother than would be possible for the whole church, whose report in the case would have great weight with the assembly.

As in everything with which our poor human nature has to do, so here there is a constant tendency to two extremes. On the one hand our Theological Institute needs constantly replenishing with students and the churches are crying out for pastors, and the new fields ever opening up invite occupancy if we have the men. Consequently, since there are comparatively so few who desire the self-denying and ill-paid profession of the ministry, there is a

disposition to be easily satisfied as to qualifications, if only the desire exists. Yet nothing can be more fatal to the success of the good cause which we have at heart, than to spoil often for other honorable paths of life, a young man by training him for the ministry in which he can never have "aptness to teach," and wherein he lacks the qualifications that are essential to success. One right man is worth more than a dozen wrong ones. But on the other hand there is sometimes a scarcely less injurious extreme in the estimate formed of what is needful, so that nothing short of "a star of the first magnitude" is supposed fitted to shine in our firmament. This is a great mistake, for very inferior stars have been in all ages honoured of God to diffuse a blessed saving light among their fellowmen. Great talents are not required, but good serviceable ones are demanded by the exigencies of the work of the ministry. Let the churches understand their responsibility in the matter of bringing out this talent while it may be so consecrated, into the ministry of the word. And let it not be forgotten that "the field is the world." Devoted and qualified labourers are wanted not for Canada only or mainly, but for the immense masses of our race among whom an effectual door has been recently opened for the unimpeded entrance of the churches of Christ with the message of salvation in their hands and on their lips. At the ordination of these young brethren, whether as Evangelists or Pastors of Churches that call them to take oversight, it is meet, whenever practicable, that there should be some representative present from the Church out of which they came forth. These links of connexion are worth preserving. Let attention be given on such occasion to the matter of a proper certificate

of ordination which ought to be written on something more durable than paper.

The following form is suggested, though others might be drawn up equally, if not more appropriate:—

—————, 18——.

We, the undersigned, being fully satisfied of the faith, the Christian character, and the intellectual and other qualifications of ———, did this day, in ———, unite in setting him apart, by prayer and imposition of hands, to the work of the holy ministry, and in commending him to the grace of God for the fulfilment of that work, in ———, and wherever Providence might cast his lot.

An attempt has thus been made to bring under a rapid review the subject of the administration of our church polity. Attention has been directed to what a church is, to its independence, and yet to its connexion with sister churches. The distinction between principle and details has been noted—the power of the church to adopt rules and plans not inconsistent with the divine behests, and also the responsibility of each member for the character of the church and for its acts. The organization of a church at first,—its functions always and the best modes of performing, are points that have been brought out more or less at length. These introduced the *Church Meeting* which has engaged prolonged attention, including the pastors authority and rule, the rights of the members, the admission and dismissal of members, and the whole subject of church discipline. In addition to the spiritual business of a church, mention has been made of its finances and of its temporal affairs. The finality of church action has been urged,—also the fact that officers are

amenable to the church for mal-administration, but are not usually to be directed, and that deacons ought to be an important help to the pastor. Brief attention has been given to the importance of training the members for usefulness, and to the vital matter of training young brethren for the work of the Christian ministry.

In conclusion, the conviction is expressed, after an experience as a pastor of more than a quarter of a century, that no system of church polity is equally adapted with ours to fulfil the design of the great Head of the church in the institution and organization of churches. There exists, moreover, an equally firm persuasion that none can be worked with greater ease, freedom, pleasantness, and efficiency, provided the membership consists of truly Christian people, and "the spirit of power, and of love and of a sound mind" is in exercise in an ordinary measure. Congregational Independency has already done an important work in Canada, not merely in the conversion of sinners, and in the gathering of churches,—not merely in its well-organized missionary movements, and in its training of many for usefulness,—but also in the diffusion of right views of the spiritual nature of our Lord's kingdom, and in awakening a public sentiment which renders it no longer possible to unite church and state in that mischievous combination which has wrought so disastrously in the old world. We have no quarrel with our brethren of other communions, nor do we blame them for their conscientious convictions, nor even for their preferences, whether of taste or of historical association. We can understand the influence upon the Episcopalian of such names as Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth, of Cranmer, Hooker "the

judicious," and Jeremy Taylor, and also of their time-honoured, and in many respects beautiful, liturgical service. We can understand the fire kindled in the souls of our Presbyterian friends as they think of John Knox, of the Covenanters, and of such men as Dr. Chalmers. That quaint old version of the Psalms too with which they are familiar from their infancy has a mighty charm. The John Wesley, moreover, of our Methodist friends, and his brother Charles, were men of no mean repute, whose names shall be had in everlasting remembrance.

It is fitting that in this noble province there should be representatives of the church forms and ideas with which these names were respectively identified. But, to take the lowest ground, is it not equally fitting that the ecclesiastical descendants of John Milton and John Howe, of John Robinson and the Pilgrim Fathers of New England, of Calamy, and Matthew Henry, and Isaac Watts, and Doddridge, and President Edwards, and in later times of Dwight, Pye Smith, Harris, and Wardlaw, and a host of worthies who not only left their mark upon their own generation, but have mightily influenced every one since, should have a name and a place in our Canada? May the good Lord bless the work of their hands who are connected with other communions; but we will pray with special favor for the peace of that part of Jerusalem in which our good banner waves. We would have a broad, genial catholic spirit cultivated by our churches; but we would also have the warmest and tenderest love cherished for our own ancient and scriptural polity.

What is truly needed among us in order to the utmost efficiency and blessedness, is the temper of mind described

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by one of our fathers, Dr. Dwight, in his well-known hymn, which should be in the memory of every member of our churches :—

“ I love thy kingdom, Lord,—
The house of thine abode ;
The church our blest Redeemer saved
With his own precious blood.

I love thy church, O God !
Her walls before thee stand,
Dear as the apple of thine eye,
And graven on thy hand.

For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend ;
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end.

Beyond my highest joy
I prize her heavenly ways,
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,
Her hymns of love and praise.

Jesus, thou Friend divine,
Our Saviour and our king,
Thy hand from every snare and foe
Shall great deliv’rance bring.

Sure as thy truth shall last,
To Zion shall be given
The brightest glories earth can yield,
And brighter bliss of heaven.”

APPENDIX

DECLARATION

OF THE

FAITH, CHURCH ORDER, AND DISCIPLINE OF THE CONGREGATIONAL OR INDEPENDENT CHURCHES,

AS SET FORTH IN THE DECLARATION ADOPTED AT THE GENERAL
MEETING OF THE CONGREGATIONAL UNION OF ENGLAND
AND WALES, HELD IN LONDON, MAY 7, 8 AND 10, 1833.

The Congregational Churches in Great Britain, frequently called Independent, hold the following Doctrines as of Divine authority, and as the foundation of Christian faith and practice.

They are also formed and governed according to the principles hereinafter stated.

Preliminary Notes.

1. It is not designed, in the following summary, to do more than to state the leading Doctrines of Faith and order maintained by British Congregational Churches in general.

2. It is not proposed to offer any *proofs, reasons or arguments*, in support of the Doctrines herein stated but simply to *declare* what the denomination believes to be taught by the pen of inspiration.

3. It is not intended to present a *scholastic or critical* confession of faith, but merely such a statement as any intelligent member of the body might offer, as containing its leading principles.

4. It is not intended that the following statement should be put forth with any authority, or as a standard to which assent should be required.

5. Disallowing the utility of Creeds and Articles of Religion as a bond of union, and protesting against subscription to any

human formularies, as a term of communion, Congregationalists are yet willing to declare, for general information, what is commonly believed among them, reserving to every one the most perfect liberty of conscience.

6. Upon some minor points of doctrine and practice, they, differing among themselves, allow to each other the right to form an unbiassed judgment of the Word of God.

7. They wish it to be observed, that, notwithstanding their jealousy of subscription to Creeds and Articles, and their disapproval of the imposition of any human standard, whether of faith or discipline, they are far more agreed in their doctrines and practices than any Church which enjoins subscription, and enforces a human standard of orthodoxy; and they believe that there is no Minister and no Church among them that would deny the substance of any one of the following Doctrines of Religion though each might prefer to state his sentiments his own way.

Principles of Religion.

I. The Scriptures of the Old Testament, as received by the Jews, and the books of the New Testament, as received by the primitive Christians from the Evangelists and Apostles, Congregational Churches believe to be Divinely inspired, and of Supreme authority. These writings, in the languages in which they were originally composed, are to be consulted, by the aids of sound criticism, as a final appeal in all controversies; but the common version they consider to be adequate to the ordinary purposes of Christian instruction and edification.

II. They believe in One God, essentially wise, holy, just, and good; eternal, infinite, and immutable, in all natural and moral perfections; the Creator, Supporter, and Governor of all beings and of all things.

III. They believe that God is revealed in the Scriptures as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that to each are attributable the same Divine properties and perfections. The doctrine of the Divine existence, as above stated, they cordially believe, without attempting fully to explain.

IV. They believe that man was created after the Divine image, sinless, and in his kind perfect.

V. They believe that the first man disobeyed the Divine command, fell from his state of innocence and purity, and involved all his posterity in the consequences of that fall.

VI. They believe that therefore all mankind are born in sin, and that a fatal inclination to moral evil, utterly incurable by human means, is inherent in every descendant of Adam.

VII. They believe that God having, before the foundation of the world, designed to redeem fallen man, made disclosures of his mercy, which were the grounds of faith and hope from the earliest ages.

VIII. They believe that God revealed more fully to Abraham the covenant of his grace; and, having promised that from his descendants should arise the Deliverer and Redeemer of mankind, set that patriarch and his posterity apart as a race specially favoured and separated to his service; a peculiar Church, formed and carefully preserved under the Divine sanction and government, until the birth of the promised Messiah.

IX. They believe that, in the fulness of the time, the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, being born of the Virgin Mary, but conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit; and that our Lord Jesus Christ was both the Son of man and the Son of God; partaking fully and truly of human nature, though without sin,—equal with the Father and “the express image of his person.”

X. They believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, revealed, either personally in his own ministry, or by the Holy Spirit in the ministry of his apostles, the whole mind of God, for our salvation; and that, by his obedience to the Divine law while he lived, and by his sufferings unto death, he meritoriously “obtained eternal redemption for us;” having thereby vindicated and illustrated Divine justice, “magnified the law,” and “brought in everlasting righteousness.”

XI. They believe that, after his death and resurrection, he ascended up into Heaven, where, as the Mediator, he “ever liveth,” to rule over all, and to “make intercession for them that come unto God by him.”

XII. They believe that the Holy Spirit is given in consequence of Christ's mediation, to quicken and renew the hearts of men ; and that his influence is indispensably necessary to bring a sinner to true repentance, to produce saving faith, to regenerate the heart, and to perfect our sanctification.

XIII. They believe that we are justified through faith in Christ as "the Lord our righteousness," and not "by the works of the Law."

XIV. They believe that all who will be saved were the objects of God's eternal and electing love, and were given by an act of Divine Sovereignty to the Son of God ; which in no way interferes with the system of means, nor with grounds of human responsibility, being wholly unrevealed as to its objects, and not a rule of human duty.

XV. They believe that the Scriptures teach the final perseverance of all true believers to a state of eternal blessedness, which they are appointed to obtain through constant faith in Christ, and uniform obedience to his commands.

XVI. They believe that a holy life will be the necessary effect of a true faith, and that good works are the certain fruits of a vital union to Christ.

XVII. They believe that the sanctification of true Christians, or their growth in the graces of the Spirit, and meetness for heaven, is gradually carried on through the whole period during which it pleases God to continue them in the present life ; and that, at death, their souls, perfectly freed from all remains of evil, are immediately received into the presence of Christ.

XVIII. They believe in the perpetual obligation of Baptism and the Lord's Supper : the former to be administered to all converts to Christianity and their children, by the application of water to the subject, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ;" and the latter to be celebrated by Christian Churches as a token of faith in the Saviour, and of brotherly love.

XIX. They believe that Christ will finally come to judge the whole human race, according to their works ; that the bodies of

the dead will be raised again ; and that, as the Supreme Judge, he will divide the righteous from the wicked, will receive the righteous into "life everlasting," but send away the wicked into "everlasting punishment."

XX. They believe that Jesus Christ directed his followers to live together in Christian fellowship, and to maintain the communion of saints ; and that, for this purpose, they are jointly to observe all Divine ordinances, and maintain that Church order and discipline which is either expressly enjoined by inspired institution, or sanctioned by the undoubted example of the Apostles and of Apostolic Churches.

Principles of Church Order and Discipline.

I. The Congregational Churches hold it to be the will of Christ that true believers should voluntarily assemble together to observe religious ordinances, to promote mutual edification and holiness, to perpetuate and propagate the Gospel in the world, and to advance the glory and worship of God through Jesus Christ ; and that each society of believers, having these objects in view in its formation, is properly a Christian Church.

II. They believe that the New Testament contains, either in the form of express statute, or in the example and practice of Apostles and Apostolic Churches, all the Articles of Faith necessary to be believed, and all the principles of order and discipline requisite for constituting and governing Christian societies ; and that human traditions, fathers, and councils, canons, and creeds, possess no authority over the faith and practice of Christians.

III. They acknowledge Christ as the only Head of the Church, and the officers of each Church under him as ordained to administer his laws impartially to all ; and their only appeal, in all questions touching their religious faith and practice, is to the Sacred Scriptures.

IV. They believe that the New Testament authorizes every Christian Church to elect its own officers, to manage all its own affairs, and to stand independent of, and irresponsible to, al

authority, saving that only of the Supreme and Divine Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

V. They believe that the only officers placed by the Apostles over individual Churches, are the Bishops or Pastors, and the Deacons; the numbers of these being dependent upon the number, of the Church; and that to these, as the officers of the Church, is committed respectively the administration of its spiritual and temporal concerns—subject, however, to the approbation of the Church.

VI. They believe that no person should be received as Members of Christian Churches but such as make a credible profession of Christianity, are living according to its precepts, and attest a willingness to be subject to its discipline; and that none should be excluded from the fellowship of the Church but such as deny the faith of Christ, violate his laws, or refuse to submit themselves to the discipline which the Word of God enforces.

VII. The power of the admission into any Christian Church, and rejection from it, they believe to be vested in the Church itself, and to be exercised only through the medium of its own officers.

VIII. They believe that the Christian Churches should statedly meet for the celebration of public worship, for the observance of the Lord's Supper, and for the sanctification of the first day of the week.

IX. They believe that the power of a Christian Church is purely spiritual, and should in no way be corrupted by union with temporal or civil power.

X. They believe that it is the duty of Christian Churches to hold communion with each other, to entertain an enlarged affection for each other, as members of the same body, and to co-operate for the promotion of the Christian cause; but that no Church, nor union of Churches, has any right or power to interfere with the faith or discipline of any other Church, further than to separate from such as, in faith or practice, depart from the Gospel of Christ.

XI. They believe that it is the privilege and duty of every Church to call forth such of its members as may appear to be qualified, by the Holy Spirit, to sustain the office of the ministry ; and that Christian Churches unitedly ought to consider the maintenance of the Christian ministry in an adequate degree of learning, as one of its especial cares ; that the cause of the Gospel may be both honourably sustained, and constantly promoted.

XII. They believe that Church officers, whether Bishops or Deacons, should be chosen by the free voice of the Church, but that their dedication to the duties of their office should take place with special prayer, and by solemn designation, to which most of the Churches add the imposition of hands by those already in office.

XIII. They believe that the fellowship of every Christian Church should be so liberal as to admit to communion in the Lord's Supper all whose faith and godliness are, on the whole, undoubted, though conscientiously differing in points of minor importance ; and that this outward sign of fraternity in Christ should be co-extensive with the fraternity itself, though without involving any compliances which conscience would deem to be sinful.

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